

# Regional Rambler

## Living Skies Regional Council The United Church of Canada



May 20, 2020

1. **Living Skies News:** Celebrating our admittands, retirees, and regional gathering planning committee; Temporary Pastoral Charge Supervisors; "Re-opening" discernment and practices resource; **Regional check-ins and support (Tues & Weds)**; Groups concerned about low levels of SK government funding for emergency housing in COVID; Put your community event on our website; Worship themes & resources for May and June; Working Towards Wholeness: Intercultural words from Rev. SunDo Hyun; Seven Saskatoon LGBTQIA+-Affirming ministries targeted by homophobic graffiti;
2. **Wider Church Information:** **National Time Sensitive Webinars:** **May 20 and May 21**; United in Learning webinars... continue!; National COVID Updates; COVID and stewardship: supporting global partners;
3. **Upcoming Learning Opportunities:** Living Skies Event Calendar Highlights; Eco-Commoning project; National webinar: Becoming a Trans Ally / Accomplice (**May 25**); Advocacy for and with refugees online workshop series; Stewardship Through New Eyes;
4. **Reminders:** Pastoral Ponderings #15; A new MP letter from Adam Hanley; Living Spirit UC (Calgary) tells its COVID story; Emergency financial information: web resources; Racism during the Pandemic; **Helpful Pandemic Resources:** Financial Decisions during Pandemic; Governance During the Pandemic; Congregational givings; Video Resources on trauma and self care; Worship resources;

### **1. Living Skies Regional Council News:**

#### **Celebrating our admittands, retirees, and regional gathering planning committee**

May 21 should have been a busy day of gathering together in Humboldt for the second regional gathering, and a celebration of those retiring and those being admitted to the United Church. Instead, writes Executive Minister Shannon McCarthy, we will celebrate from a distance, for now. [Click here for her letter.](#)

#### **Temporary Pastoral Charge Supervisors**

As Communities of Faith engage conversations regarding re-opening, there continue to be places where a Pastoral Charge Supervisor is required. The role of the Pastoral Charge Supervisor is to walk with a community of faith advising on United Church of Canada policy and polity, and providing the necessary requirement for quorum for meetings of the governing body. In ordinary times, an appointment as a pastoral charge supervisor is made with an unspecified end date (or until ministry personnel is called or appointed). Given that all governing body gatherings are happening remotely (by conference call or online), it would be possible to participate in a time-limited manner to help governing bodies in these important times of discernment and assessment. If you are able to serve in a time-limited fashion (just for a meeting or two), please contact Tracy Murton [tmurton@united-church.ca](mailto:tmurton@united-church.ca) to discern where your skills and gifts might be best used in our Regional Council.

#### **"Re-opening" discernment and practices resource**

From the national church: An important [three-part resource](#) on "re-opening" discernment and practices.

Thank you to the many people involved in thinking carefully about the many practical, spiritual, and ethical complexities of these decisions. As always, we are expected to keep ourselves up to date on provincial, territorial, and local health authority updates and restrictions when making decisions. Please also see [Executive Minister Shannon McCarthy's letter](#) on this important conversation.

Please share widely and use the link only. It's expected that information at this link will continue to be updated and added to, and the date on the page will change to reflect this. The link itself will remain the

same. The “re-opening” link again: <https://www.united-church.ca/community-faith/being-community/reopening-churches-during-covid-19>

#### **Regional check in and support meetings:**

The Regional Council will continue with **Tuesday ministry personnel check ins** that are Region-specific.

Please see your Regional Council’s Events calendar or check with your Pastoral Relations Minister.

**\*Postponed to Tuesday, May 26\*, 1:00pm:** Diane Strickland, United Church Minister, Certified Community and Workplace Traumatologist, Compassion Fatigue Therapist, and a Critical Incident Responder for a national health service provider. **Topic:** What train hit us? Trauma symptoms and coping, individual and collective trauma, changing how you do ministry. Diane is a therapist who specializes in post-traumatic recovery for individuals and communities who experience collective trauma.

#### **Tri-Region Lay leadership Wednesday evening meetings:**

**Wednesday, May 27 Topic: Questions and answers for re-opening your churches in Living Skies.** Please share this note with your board chair, ministry personnel or anyone who wants to be involved in the conversation. **6:30PM in SK.** Meeting link: <https://united-church.zoom.us/j/92436034028>; Toll-free 1-855-703-8985 Meeting ID: 924 3603 4028 **(Do not post this link on social media or your congregational website, please. Share it by email.)**

For June we will gather as needed (rather than weekly) as the situation continues to evolve. Watch the *Rambler* and Facebook for invitations! Have an idea for a gathering topic? We need to hear from you. Please email your regional council office at [livingskies@united-church.ca](mailto:livingskies@united-church.ca)

#### **Groups concerned about low levels of SK government funding for emergency housing in COVID**

A few weeks ago Saskatoon churches stepped up to furnish some desperately needed transitional housing for people who have been released from jail because of COVID concerns. It was decided that opening church buildings for emergency shelter was not the best way forward, and that our congregations could provide others supports instead. But in these conversations about emergency shelter, deep concerns about both need and capacity emerged.

Community and street outreach organizations across the province have expressed deep concern about the province’s very low level of funding for emergency and transitional shelter in the midst of the COVID crisis. The province set only \$171,000 aside for shelter services in ten communities. By contrast, if Saskatchewan were to fund emergency shelter at the same level per capita as Alberta, it would have offered \$9 million to authorized community and crisis organizations.

Saskatoon Interagency Response [prepared this video](#) to bring attention to underfunding; members have also noted that this crisis simply highlights the very poor state of government under funding of housing in Saskatchewan. As with many other social needs, COVID is shining a light on cracks that have long been a reality in our support systems.

#### **Reminder: Put your community event on our website!**

You can still promote your local event through our website. Regular worship should be registered with the national church’s map and listings, but everything from bible study to a workshop to drive up pie or bannock fundraisers can be shared on our Communities of Faith events calendar through our [community form](#). The event needs to be a United Church event open to the public. Give it a try!

#### **Worship themes and resources for May and June**

All special Sundays and worship resources for them are noted [here in this handy summary](#). Many of our special Sundays highlight diverse communities and special ministries. May is Asian Heritage Month, celebrating the roots and cultures of many in our church and across Canada who hold Asian heritage.

[Worship resources for your use are available here](#). In a [personal reflection](#), Rev Dr Alan Lai invites us in the intercultural challenges of Asian Heritage Month.

Advance reminder to all your amazing online worship planners and leaders: In June both Indigenous and LGBTQIA+ communities are a focus for the United Church. June 7 is [Pride Sunday](#) (as well as Union Sunday- the best of liturgical luck with mixing these two themes.) June 21 is National Indigenous Day and the Indigenous Day of Prayer; find [new resources for this important day here](#).

## **Working Towards Wholeness: intercultural words from Rev SunDo Hyun**

Rev SunDo Hyun, serving Grace United Church in Meadow Lake, offers his personal Asian Heritage Month reflections on him and his family's experience as racialized immigrants to Canada: both the struggles and the new learnings. [Read his reflection here.](#)

## **Seven Saskatoon LGBTQIA+-Affirming ministries targeted by homophobic graffiti**

In the early hours of Sunday May 10 Grosvenor Park and McClure United Churches and St Andrew's College were targeted by extensive homophobic graffiti. Members and supporters cleaned off the spray paint and a media release was sent out. [Here's the story from the Star-Phoenix](#). The perpetrator was caught in the act, charged with mischief, and released the next day. Early on Wednesday May 13, he targeted Saskatoon Unitarian, St George's Anglican Church, Emmanuel Anglican Church, and St Thomas Wesley United Church, all of which are openly LGBTQIA+ affirming. The perpetrator then threw rocks at the police headquarters, was arrested, and told police he had targeted several ministries. He is currently in remand awaiting psychiatric assessment.

[Saskatoon Affirming Ministries released this response](#). The many words of support, videos, and more from across the Regional Council, wider church and within the community itself are much appreciated.

## **2. Wider Church Information:**

### **National Time-sensitive Webinars**

**May 20: Congregational finances during the pandemic.** This continuing Wednesday series keeps us up to date on financial aid that continues to evolve rapidly. Webinars are recorded and can be watched after the fact. Time: **5:00PM in SK**. Access this through [United in Learning](#) or the [national church's YouTube channel](#).

**May 21: Congregational programming** During the pandemic, United-in-Learning is offering a weekly series for ministers and church leaders, with just-in-time skills and reflections intended to help us all respond to the unusual situation we find ourselves in. If you have specific requests or suggestions for future topics, please [CLICK HERE](#) to email us! [Here's full information on this weekly series](#).

United in Learning will continue to offer its regular programming as well. [Click here for info](#).

### **National COVID updates**

[Stay up to date](#) with the latest tools, news, and resources related to faith communities and COVID-19. You can find information on:

- [Worship during COVID-19](#)
- [Emergency Funding for Congregations](#)
- [Governance during the Pandemic](#)
- [Stewardship, Finances, and COVID-19](#)
- [Mission & Service stories during the Pandemic](#)

### **COVID and stewardship: resources, supporting global partners**

People of the United Church have asked how they can support our church as we reach out to partners and the vulnerable communities they work with during this time of pandemic. The United Church is now accepting donations to help support Mission & Service partners in the global South as they work to meet the needs of these communities in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. To learn more and support this appeal, visit [COVID-19: Global Response](#).

Many of the communities Mission & Service partners work with are already living with hunger, lack of access to water, crowded living conditions, and limited health care. COVID-19 has made these heartbreaking realities worse. The United Church is [working faithfully with partners](#) to address immediate needs for food and supplies to help keep communities safe during the pandemic.

## **3. Upcoming Learning Opportunities:**

**Events in Living Skies: highlights - [Events calendar](#)**

## **Eco-Commoning project online national events, May 21**

Join us online to think creatively about commoning, social innovation and social enterprise in communities of faith. Take part in an interactive key-note presentation from Rev Dr Ted Reeve and The Very Rev Bill Phipps on how the social/economic theory of “communing” applies to spirituality and communities of faith; engage with local stories and take-part in conversation-style action planning and reflection through the World Cafe model. Prairie resource people who are part of local “eco-commoning” will join us. [Full details are available here.](#)

## **National webinar: Becoming a Trans Ally / Accomplice: Monday May 25, 2020 @ 5:00PM in Saskatchewan**

Trans and non-binary people are members of the United Church; they are our ministers, our lay leaders, our children and youth, our neighbours, our colleagues, our family and friends. But despite church policies and federal and provincial laws that affirm transgender people, they still face disproportionately high rates of discrimination. If you are interested in learning how to be a trans ally/accomplice then this webinar is for you!

*If you're a Regional Council delegate* you will be voting on a remit related to inclusive, non-binary language in the Basis of Union and this webinar will help you hear why that change is important. Learn what it means to stand in solidarity with trans and non-binary people, to speak out consistently, address systemic transphobia, and actively participate in witnessing to and advocating with trans and non-binary people for their rights and human dignity. [Find out more and register.](#)

## **Advocacy for and with refugees online workshop series**

The Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) is holding their 2020 Spring Consultation online from **May 19 - June 26, 2020**. CCR is a long time United Church partner and a well-respected education and advocacy group for the rights of people seeking refuge and their supporters. Participate in the Virtual Spring Consultation to explore current issues affecting refugee protection and newcomer settlement, featuring perspectives from all Canadian provinces and experts in diverse fields. All are welcome!

<https://ccrweb.ca/en/2020-spring-consultation>

## **Online workshop: Stewardship Through New Eyes**

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese invites us to register for a free series of ecumenical webinars on stewardship, Thursdays at 3pm (Saskatchewan time).

**May 21** - "Stewardship through new eyes" with Susan Graham Walker

May 28 - "Growing the stewardship garden" with Fr. John Weckend

June 4 - "Relational giving" with Susan Graham Walker and others

June 11 - "Legacy giving" with Kurtis Krug, professional financial advisor

All are welcome for one or all webinars. Free of charge. Registration required: <https://bit.ly/3fwRjta>

For further information, contact: Archdeacon Cheryl Toth at [stewardship@sasktel.net](mailto:stewardship@sasktel.net) This series is organized by the Anglican Diocese of Qu'Appelle, the Saskatchewan Synod of the ELCIC, and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Regina.

## **4. Reminders:**

### **The work of the Pastoral Relations Committee - [Pastoral Relations Ponderings Vol 15](#)**

[A new letter to Ministry Personnel with in our Region from Rev. Adam Hanley](#), Program Coordinator, Ministry Personnel Vitality, Office of Vocation.

### **Living Spirit UC in Calgary tells its COVID story**

Calgary's Living Spirit United Church (Chinook Winds Regional Council) is choosing to tell the story of their experience with COVID-19. As Rev. Shannon Mang says, "We don't want another organization or faith community to go through what we've been through." The congregation offers us this story as a public service, as the church and the wider community alike contemplate "re-opening". Thank you, Living Spirit United Church, for all that you do for the people you serve and for offering us all courageous leadership.  
[Click here for the CTV article.](#)

## **Emergency financial information: web resources**

**[Your homepage for all COVID related finances is here.](#)**

The national church has now shared a new summary of [United Church-related emergency financial options](#).

This includes a [bridging loan application form](#) that will be approved through your Regional Council. This is the first time in living memory that emergency loans on this scale are available to communities of faith nationally.

This program is made possible by a \$3 million grant from [The United Church of Canada Foundation](#). The money comes from the generous bequests of members over the years. Their gifts are ensuring the future of the church.

Please review all information carefully, as the order in which you proceed is important. [Here's an overview of things you'll need to consider](#) as you make a financial plan. The continuing [weekly financial webinars at United in Learning](#) are also an important support, but please be aware that information in the older recorded webinars has likely changed.

## **Racism during the pandemic: A United Church member reflects**

From the beginning of this pandemic, incidents of racism against Asian communities and individuals have marred our communal response to COVID. [In this reflection on racism and COVID](#), Kim Uyede-Kai notes that "The curve of the escalation of the disease of racism is rising with the curve of the escalation of COVID-19. While there is presently no vaccine against either disease to stop the spread of both, COVID-19 will eventually be eradicated. Racism will continue to mutate unless we make collective efforts to stop the spread." She concludes with practical suggestions that could help us identify and address racist comments and acts in our day to day conversations and relationships.

## **Helpful Pandemic Resources:**

**Staff from Living Skies Regional Council** have put together a document titled **Financial Decisions during Pandemic**. [To see the document, click here.](#)

**Governance during the pandemic** - Several important updates/clarifications from General Council Exec: [a governance overview is here](#), and a [specific resource is here](#). Also a [temporary amendment to some key pastoral relations policies](#).

**Congregational giving at a time like this** an overview of options for giving regularly and at a distance: <https://www.united-church.ca/community-faith/being-community/congregational-finances-and-covid-19>

**Video resources on trauma and self care** Rev. Diane Strickland offers an [overview on supporting one another](#) here, and these videos offer further "pandemic practicums". Please share- and thank you, Diane. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DUIX9Oaerzl&t=34s> <https://www.youtube.com/embed/KIrJZE2I9aQ>

**Worship resources** questions about everything from technology to music licensing continue to fly. <https://www.united-church.ca/community-faith/being-community/tools-worship-during-covid-19>